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THE CHALLENGE OF FARM HOUSING TO EXTENSION WORKERS IN 1949\*

Farm building construction has increased rapidly since the close of the war. Extension workers have responded to the increasing requests for assistance. With reference to new farm houses:

in 1945 - 1,567 counties reported 24,768 families assisted  
in 1946 - 1,920 counties reported 45,193 families assisted  
in 1947 - 2,061 counties reported 47,535 families assisted

and with reference to remodeling farm houses:

in 1945 - 1,995 counties reported 68,956 families assisted  
in 1946 - 2,308 counties reported 109,775 families assisted  
in 1947 - 2,456 counties reported 108,166 families assisted

These figures, summarized from questions 105a and 105b in county statistical reports, are not available for 1948 at this date, but the trend would indicate that county extension workers have assisted about one-half million farm families with new and remodeled housing from the close of the war to the close of 1948. This estimate does not include figures from any other items, such as repair, modern equipment, and kitchen improvement, which might duplicate some cases.

Extension assistance with plans and advice for other farm building construction was similarly in great demand. Statistical summaries of the Extension assistance provided for new house construction and remodeling of farm dwellings are attached. Probably county extension workers will need more assistance with the requests about dwellings than with those about other farm buildings in 1949.

How is cooperative extension work meeting this demand? First, are we assisting all farm families who are investing in better dwellings? Second, is our advice and assistance resulting in sound economic construction, which gratifies the desires of farm families for comfortable, convenient homes of good appearance?

The accompanying summary and tabulation of a survey of farm construction made by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in April 1948 indicates approximately 160,000 new homes were built on farms in 1947. The Extension Service, as mentioned above, assisted 45,193 farm families with new house construction in 1947. If these figures are comparable, county extension workers assisted more than one-fourth of the families who built new houses in 1947. Further examination of these tables on a State basis is of interest, and obviously, many county extension agents know approximately the amount of farm housing activity in their counties and the extent and effectiveness of their assistance.

\*Information for extension committees planning farm housing work, prepared by S. P. Lyle, In Charge, Agricultural Section, Division of Subject Matter, Extension Service, USDA.

MAR - 2 1949



Extension workers are reporting more than twice as many farm families given assistance on remodeling houses as on new house construction. In 1947, for example, 108,166 families were assisted with remodeling and 47,535 with new houses. The two figures combined indicate that 155,701 farm families were assisted in realizing their ambitions for modern farm homes. The 1948 summaries of county figures on questions 105a and 105b are already available in most States. Some of these show increasing extension work and others decreasing activity. It would be well to compare these with the State figures on the accompanying tables and plan assistance to county agents in 1949 accordingly.

The BAE table indicates that four percent of the farm families of the United States started or completed new house construction in 1947. This is based on the 240,000 farm figure in their summary statement. If based on the 160,000 figure, limited to houses started in 1947, the percentage would be about two and two-thirds percent. If the rate of remodeling is about twice that of new house construction, the combined percentage would indicate that eight percent of the farm homes in the United States were being modernized in 1947. Farm home modernization is continuing at a high rate. This presents a challenging opportunity for extension workers to assist farm families in attaining their aims with investments in better living.

The subject matter for extension work in housing is, of course, broader in scope than planning and construction which, however, furnish the most convenient figures for measuring activity. Now is a good time for State extension housing committees to appraise the job for 1949. The accompanying outline "An Extension Program in Rural Housing" issued in 1946 may be helpful.

Attachments - 3

- 1.913 H3St2 Statistical Summary of Cooperative Extension Work in Housing 1940-1947 -  
January 1949
- 1.941 A25u8 Survey Indicates Approximately 160,000 New Homes Built on Farms in 1947 -  
December 10, 1948
- 1.913 H3E18 An Extension Program in Rural Housing by S. P. Lyle - November 1, 1946
- 4, R. U.S.